

August 11, 2024

Honorable Kiyo A. Matsumoto  
U.S. District Court Judge  
Eastern District of New York  
225 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, New York 11201

Dear Judge Matsumoto,

My name is Alice Yusuf, I am 71 years old mother and grandmother, and am US citizen. I came to US as a refugee from Soviet Union 35 years ago with 2 small children. I worked for 30 years as a medical assistant, and I still work full time. I am writing this letter on behalf of my grandson, Jacob Yusuf, who lives with me in 2 bedroom apartment for seven years. His father, who is my son, wanted him to stay with me since I got some health issues. Jacob has been a big help in my life as a very gentle, caring, good-natures, respectful person. He helps me with laundry, grocery, shopping, takes all heavy deliveries upstairs. With my heart problem and multiple medications, Jacob is always sensitive and delicate with me, trying to protect my wellbeing from any kind of stress. Jacob loves to cook, and help me with some stuff around the household. He is very intelligent, very knowledgeable in literature, science, history. He always been interested in our background, we have discussion about life in Soviet Union, talk about poets, writers, and politics. He has a lot of books; his favorite writers are Pushkin and Hemingway. We both watched a lot of classic movies based on famous writer's books and always have interesting discussions. When Jacob was in High School he published his first book. That was a beautiful poems book about love, life, friendship. He loves to write poems, and compose music, listen to jazz and make his own interpretation, he plays guitar, piano, but most of all he loves to read. He has a strong will to learn and create. He has his own library where he collects a lot of books. Jacob finished one of the best colleges and got his college degree. Jacob voluntarily went to serve in US Army. He is a member of armed forces, and he is very proud of it. As a grandmother, I wish him a bright future; he has a lot of potentials, a lot of knowledge, good character, and positive reputation among his college and army friends. Please show him mercy. I am not getting any younger; I would hate to see his life being ruined. It will break my heart.

Thank you for taking your time to read my letter.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Alice Yusuf', written in dark ink.

Alice Yusuf

Honorable Kiyo A. Matsumoto  
U.S. District Court Judge  
Eastern District of New York  
225 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Judge Matsumoto,

My name is Kirill. I am a construction estimator at a plumbing/fire protection company in Brooklyn. I have been a friend of Jacob's for over a decade. I met Jacob through a mutual friend/eventual roommate, and the three of us bonded over our passion for guitar. As anyone who has ever been in the same room as Jacob and a guitar will tell you, what Jacob can do with a set of strings attached to a few pieces of wood is astonishing. When he's relaxed enough around his audience to throw in his voice and sing a few verses of the latest song he's been writing (whether the lyrics are still rough/tentative or have been fine-tuned to perfection), he has moved me to tears on several occasions. The only thing that tops Jacob's gift for guitar playing is Jacob's gift for songwriting. I've always felt Jacob's lyrics reveal a profound understanding of the complexities of life and an emotional maturity well beyond his years.

Fortunately for us budding guitarists, Jacob was always happy to teach (even if, in retrospect, some of the things he can do cannot really be taught). We've spent many nights listening to him discuss the intricacies of music theory and improvisation for hours at a time, and even when not much was retained, his patience never wavered and his enthusiasm persisted. He'd often be the first to suggest we continue where we left off the next time he'd come by, whether it was days or weeks later.

I don't think he has released much of his music out into the world (although I'm sure he certainly wants to when the time is right), but my friends and I cherish the impromptu recordings we made when he played during gatherings, and we felt very lucky and proud to be some of the first people to hear what he's working on even if it happened to be in the very early stages of development (and even more proud to hear a new verse of a song he showed us a few weeks earlier, especially when there was a twist that recontextualized the rest). Although some of those recordings have been lost to the inevitable and unforgiving passage of time/broken phones without backups, we still listen to the few that remain years later (and they still hold up!).

Eventually, we insisted on paying Jacob for his lessons, and after a few weeks of persistent nagging, he finally relented, provided we agreed to his conditions: we should only pay what we could, even if it wasn't enough to cover the cost of his Uber ride home, and we should avoid handing him money directly, so we'd leave it on a table for him to collect on his way out. Although his skills as a musician and teacher would have easily justified charging a portion of the month's rent, Jacob was very adamant about not mixing business and friendship.

When we weren't playing guitar, Jacob was always eager to lend a hand with random household tasks, from preparing meals and setting up tables before barbeques to cleaning up after parties. He'd even offer to take out the trash on his way out. If he happened to come by while we were in the middle of botching an attempt to paint our walls, he'd grab a roller and apply another coat. If we were struggling to assemble a bed frame or computer desk, he'd help us disassemble it back to the crucial step that we missed. He understood the importance of guarding a slice of pizza from the insatiable jaws of our scheming cats when my roommate and I were distracted, and he performed this task swiftly and admirably.

Jacob was always a pleasure to have in group settings. His calm demeanor and exceptional patience make people feel naturally at ease around him. He'd almost always have something interesting to add to a conversation, whether it's about complex topic or casual Friday night baboonery. When a disagreement arose, he was able to politely and respectfully facilitate the conversation and debate in good faith. A friend of mine told me he found their discussions to be constructive and refreshing, even if they didn't necessarily change his mind about the topics at hand. He is a great listener and offers sincere and valuable advice when asked. He is very empathetic, rarely judgmental, and has consistently been there for me and our mutual friends when we needed his support. Looking back, I don't think I've ever seen Jacob raise his voice or speak to anyone with any level of disrespect.

While I don't share Jacob's passion for religion, I know Jacob's background as a Christian has had a strong and positive influence on his values. He doesn't talk about it much (and I guess I haven't asked), but it's very noticeable in his writing and overall philosophy on life. I was surprised to learn that Jacob wasn't raised a Christian; he became one during his college years.

I was even more surprised to learn that Jacob is a registered minister. During the later years of the COVID-19 pandemic (when restrictions were lifted), Jacob officiated the marriage of two of my closest friends in a small ceremony that took place entirely in my apartment. The bride and groom were explicitly against doing something fancy, so they were ecstatic when Jacob gave them the opportunity to get married in a comfortable setting they had grown very fond of, surrounded by a handful of close friends, two voracious cats, an apathetic rabbit, and a worn-out prop skeleton we had from a few Halloweens ago. Having gotten to know the bride and groom well for several years before that night, Jacob made an especially moving speech about the values of marriage that perfectly complemented the unique personalities of the couple and the eccentric spirit of the ceremony. I even got to object (with the bride's permission!) Years later, we still cherish the memories we made that night, and I don't think I'll ever attend a more uniquely personal (and unreasonably convenient) wedding ever again.

The charges against my friend do not sound like the Jacob I know, but I know he has spent the last year earnestly reevaluating himself and reflecting on the effects his actions have had on others. While he tends to be reserved, it is easy to see how much this has humbled and hurt him.

I feel that Jacob still has a lot to offer to the world, and I'd like to see him get the chance to live up to his full potential, give back to his community, and continue to enrich the lives of the people around him.

And I'd like to be there to give him the support that he was always able to give me.

I'm convinced that he's more than this.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read/consider this letter.

Sincerely,

Kirill Ulanovskiy

Assistant United States Attorney Katherine Onyshko  
Eastern District of New York  
271 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, New York 11201

Dear AUSA Onyshko,

I am writing to provide a character reference for Jacob, whom I have had the privilege of knowing and working with both professionally and personally over the past five years in the United States Army Reserve (USAR).

My name is Erik Jones, and I serve as both a teacher and a non-commissioned officer in the USAR. With eight years of teaching experience and thirteen years of service in the USAR, I have had ample opportunity to observe Jacob's conduct and performance.

Currently, I serve as Jacob's Detachment Sergeant in our military unit. Throughout my professional relationship with Jacob I have seen nothing but exemplary service for our unit and country. Jacob, when given a task, has always performed exemplary. He has high standards for any task that is given to him and is detail oriented about his work. During a training exercise with our Battalion (about 500 personnel) Jacob was recognized by the command staff for outstanding work and commitment for his ability to adapt and improvise to achieve the mission. From a unit perspective Jacob is always willing to adapt to meet the needs of the Company. Jacob has moved within the unit and is dedicated to expanding his craft in order to best assist the unit and its needs. Throughout his military career, he has exemplified unwavering professionalism in his service to both his unit and country.

I have also had the opportunity to interact with Jacob on a personal level when we are off hours. Throughout these interactions I have come to know Jacob as a kind, inquisitive and caring individual. He has shown compassion and loyalty to his fellow soldiers and is shown to have a deep and caring interest in the betterment of others within the unit. In his interactions with others he constantly seeks to improve the lives of those who surround him and he attempts to learn from each of them.

At this moment I am unaware of what the charges against Jacob are. However, in my years of experience with Jacob I cannot think of a time that his character has come into question. Throughout my interactions with him in the military I can attest to his personal and professional judgment. Thank you for your time reading over this letter. If you have any further questions please feel free to reach out.

Sincerely,  
Erik Jones

Honorable Kiyo A. Matsumoto  
U.S. District Court Judge  
Eastern District of New York  
225 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, New York 11201

August 12, 2024

Dear Honorable Kiyo A. Matsumoto

My name is Jezabel, I am a newborn and family photographer and Jacob's mother. I am writing this letter with heartfelt admiration for my son, Jacob Yusuf, and to shed some light on the exceptional character I feel he embodies.

I would like to begin by saying that Jacob's entrance into my world was a crashing wave of emotions. As a young teen mom, I had to navigate the uncertainties of parenthood with apprehension and anxiety. While I was trying to navigate what I thought a mother should be, my first born had to deal with a mother who was still learning and growing right alongside him. I had set out with the goal of making sure my child would not end up another stereotypical statistic because I was his mother. But our road didn't start off easy. We moved around a few times before finally settling down into our own place when he was 8 years old. During his formative years my mother, his grandmother, played a significant role in his upbringing, providing care and love while I pursued work and education. I was fortunate to start with an employer who allowed me to bring him along to work when I needed but there was still so much time I feel I missed. I could tell that Jacob also struggled with feelings of sadness but did a really good job in hiding his true emotions, especially once he reached his teen years. I assumed his knowledge and ways of thinking and seeing the world were causing him stress and angst. But perhaps it had more to do with the chaos that he was born into or that he was still a child who at the age of 14 was allowed to make a life decision on whether or not to move to PA with me or stay in Brooklyn with his father. We always gave Jacob more freedom than we probably should have. But he was always so good. We believed in him. We trusted him to make smart choices. And as far as we knew, he was. He was always an excellent student. Every teacher raved over his presence in their classroom. Listing off all the qualities they admired in him not just as their student but as a person.

He was always on task, responsible and very well spoken. His education was always top priority. Always buried in a book. Music had also become part of this education and at 11

years old, after only two lessons he decided he could do without an instructor and teach himself. In a couple of weeks he was playing so well, his journey in music had begun. A good friend of mine had gifted him his first guitar and his dedication to the craft led him to become an incredibly talented musician even playing shows with friends at several locations throughout NY & NJ before even finishing High School. His proficiency with the guitar is truly remarkable. When he is home with us, our house feels alive again with his music. His stepfather and younger sister love to sing along and play guitar, and drums. It creates a warm atmosphere where any mother would feel whole and so proud. In addition to his music he is also an incredibly talented writer and Journalist. At 13 years old he published his first book of poetry. Although this feat is not work he ever mentions or prides himself with, as a mother, I still consider it to be another accomplishment for such a young boy. I can only hope that he will continue to express himself through his incredible writing.

We took pride in all of these accomplishments with him and always assumed he was continuing to thrive despite the circumstances. I realize now that he shouldn't have been allowed to be on his own so much. I will always live with the reality that he was a child who needed more guidance but was instead left alone during his most crucial teenage years. I do not want to sound as if I am making any excuses for him. I believe my son is certainly smart enough to know and understand his wrongdoings. I only mention all of these pivotal moments because despite any circumstances Jacob was always steadfast. He was driven to learn all he could. Always so curious, intuitive, sensitive and sensible. He was always behaving as a protector. Wanting to make sure that I and his cousins were being treated well. As Jacob and I grew together, my anxieties dissipated, and were replaced by a deep sense of joy and pride in the young man he was becoming. Jacob continued his education into his adult years and joined the Army, something I didn't see coming. He has worked really hard trying to make a name for himself as a journalist, creating a platform for politics and speaking on adversities. He's the person we call if we have questions about politics or current events around the world and even just to inquire about proper verbiage. His siblings know he's the one to call if they have homework trouble or random questions they are sure only he can answer. Jacob's younger brother (13) and sister (9) eagerly anticipate his visits with excitement. They have missed him tremendously these last six months of not having him over.

He has proven to be a wonderful brother to his siblings, always guiding them with care and understanding. While there may be the occasional sibling quarrel, even with the age gap, Jacob's guidance has helped his younger siblings grow into better individuals both at home and in their daily lives. Jacob and his sister share a deep love for the arts, including

painting, drawing, and music. It brings me immense joy and pride to witness their creative collaboration. My daughter considers Jacob to be the best brother in the world, as he not only shares her artistic passion but also respects and values her opinions. In his siblings eyes, Jacob is the epitome of kindness and understanding. They have both expressed how smart he is and how they feel so proud that they have a brother in the Army who will fight to protect them and others. It has been very clear to me that his presence in his siblings' lives has had a profound impact on their growth and development. I have no doubt that his influence will continue to positively impact their lives in the future.

There are so many things that I can say about Jacob. Being his mother and watching him grow throughout the years has been a blessing in my life. I am proud of the steps he has made to seek the help he needs. And I truly hope that this letter was helpful in giving you some insight into his character.

I thank you so much for your time and your consideration in accepting this letter as a reference in Jacob's character.

Sincerely yours,

**Jezabel Alvarez Buzzard**

Honorable Kiyo A. Matsumoto  
U.S. District Court Judge  
Eastern District of New York  
225 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Judge Matsumoto,

My name is Megan Rios, I have been a nanny for 7 years and have been in childcare/education for over 10 years. I am writing this letter in support of Jacob Yusuf. Jacob is my cousin, I am only three years his senior so we grew up together very close, like brother and sister. Jacob has a good heart, it's all I've ever known of my cousin. As kids he would always play fair, I'd watch WWE with him and play video games and he would drive my Barbie cars around for me. As we grew up we'd meet after school to hang out, we'd babysit my little sister together, and as adults with busy lives he'd still make time to catch up and have a meal together.

He loves his family, especially his younger siblings. He dedicates time to his family even visiting our grandmother weekly for a game of dominoes. He loves reading and music. I used to go watch Jacob perform at bars/cafes, jazz nights, and even battle of the bands, so involved in the music community and has so much creativity. He's respectful and well intentioned. He joined the Army and he was just starting a great job at the United States postal service. He was feeling good about starting this new job and our family was excited for him as well.

He has so much potential still inside of him and I believe he could move on from this and live his life to the best of his abilities. I want him to have a chance to fully be an active member of society again. This is the person I know and have known his whole life. Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my letter.

Best,

*Megan Rios*

Honorable Kiyo A. Matsumoto  
U.S. District Court Judge  
Eastern District of New York  
225 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Judge Matsumoto,

My name is Nicholas Ramirez. I am a graduate student at the University of Notre Dame and work with Jacob Yusuf in the United States Army Reserve.

I first met Jacob at Advanced Individual Training (AIT) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina in October of 2019. While there, we discovered that we would be spending the following five years together at the same unit in Fort Dix, New Jersey. Since 2019, Jacob and I have been good friends. While our relationship primarily revolved around the Army Reserve and we have never spent much time together in person outside of training, we developed a closer bond around 2020/2021 when we decided to work on projects together like a podcast we used to run together on YouTube. He also began a website/blog where I wrote one article, but due to my busy schedule as a student I was unable to continue working with Jacob.

Nevertheless, Jacob and I remained in touch and he has helped me during difficult times in my life, allowing me to talk to him about what was going on in my life and supporting me when I needed it. Whenever I needed advice or input about my academic work, Jacob was always quick to help me out and give me his feedback. Sometimes he would also drive me down to training at Fort Dix when I was unable to get down there myself. He has also been there to help me with particular Army issues. Whenever I did not know what was going on for training or needed help with certain issues like sorting out my student loan repayment with the military, Jacob was quick to provide me with that information if he had it and even walk me through some of these issues if I needed it. Although at times we have disagreed, and disagreed strongly, on religious and political issues, Jacob has always been a good and faithful friend who was quick to help me at a moment's notice.

Moreover, I have personally always known Jacob to be someone who is close to his friends and family. His friends in his personal life seem to admire him and he seems to have been a good son and brother. Sometimes, Jacob would ask the unit if they would be willing to buy girl scout cookies from his sister to help her out with her girl scout duties. I have not personally seen or

heard anything that would cause me to doubt Jacob's good character, and he has certainly proven to be a faithful and good friend to me.

Thank you for your time and willingness to consider my letter.

Very Respectfully,  
Nicholas Ramirez

Honorable Kiyo A. Matsumoto  
U.S. District Court Judge  
Eastern District of New York  
225 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Judge Matsumoto,

My name is Renat Yusufov. I am writing this letter on behalf of my son, Jacob R Yusufov. The gravity of his actions has forced me to reflect deeply on my role in his upbringing and the choices I made as his father.

Becoming a father at 17 brought its own challenges. At that age, I didn't fully understand what it meant to nurture and care for my child. My own father, whom I loved and respected, faced his own struggles, and while I always felt loved through his actions, I now realize that I missed vital opportunities to show that same love in a more meaningful way when it came to my own son. I believed that providing material things would be enough to demonstrate my love and would provide Jacob with everything he needed-not just physically, but emotionally as well. I wanted him to never want for anything, but I now see how wrong I was.

When Jacob was 14, his mother entrusted me with the responsibility of raising him. He was attending school with a strong music program, and at that time, he seemed mature beyond his years. He was excelling in all of his classes, developing his musical talent, and maintaining strong friendships. I had a great kid who never got into trouble. His teachers consistently praised him, commending his wit, mannerisms, and excellent communication skills. Unfortunately I mistook this behavior for maturity, and I neglected to step up as I should have. I believed that by continuing to provide him with material wealth I was fulfilling my role as a father. Looking back I now recognize how absurd the idea was that my teenage son had it all figured out. What Jacob truly needed and what I failed to give him was my attention-my presence. He needed me to offer him a safe space to grow, to foster a healthy mind, and to guide him in making smart decisions. Instead I exposed him to an inappropriate lifestyle during some of the most formative years of his life, years when his curiosity was peaking and when a young boy needed a positive male role model in his life. I exposed him to dangerous influences: inappropriate woman, parties, and my own criminal activities. For days on end, he was left alone at home, unsupervised and vulnerable to negative influences. One of the most haunting memories I carry is of Jacob being home when our house was broken into and robbed. The image of him hiding and calling me the sound of his voice afraid and just terrified for his safety, is something I will never forget.

Despite the chaos I brought into his world, Jacob managed to excel in his studies. He remained focused and dedicated to his academics. When he formed a band and began performing in

various locations around New York and New Jersey, I was incredibly proud to be part of his journey.

Even after I was convicted and punished for my own crimes, Jacob remained level-headed. He enlisted in the Army and maintained his academic performance. As a young boy, Jacob wrote a book of poetry and I was convinced it would mark the beginning of a writing career. Later on his talent for journalism became another skill where he excelled. I believed my son was too smart to get into trouble. I thought he was mature enough to understand right from wrong, and that he would never make the same mistakes that other teens might make. But I failed to see what he really needed. I failed to recognize that he was struggling for a long time. I take full responsibility for my actions and for the environment I subjected my son to. I deeply regret that I failed to protect him and guide him as I should have. I now realize the importance of emotional support, guidance, and leading by example-things I should have been providing him all along.

This past year has forced us to confront some incredibly difficult conversations, but I assure you we are doing the work. I wholeheartedly believe that Jacob had been working very hard on healing on his own, and as a family, we are committed to continuing the healing process together. We are focused on creating a safe space. I am determined to help my son through this difficult time and will continue to provide him with the support he needs, for however long it takes. I will do everything in my power to help him reach his full potential. I am proud of the progress he's made, especially in expressing his remorse and taking accountability for his actions.

I believe my son deserves the opportunity to heal and start over while he still has the chance. I am committed to being there for him every step of the way, ensuring that he doesn't lose his way again.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Renat Yusufov

Honorable Kiyo A. Matsumoto  
U.S. District Court Judge  
Eastern District of New York  
225 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Judge Matsumoto,

My name is Alex Sherbin, and I serve as Web Developer at E-Title Direct. This letter is penned in support of my dear friend, Jacob Yusuf, a person whose character and integrity I have had the privilege to witness and learn from over the span of more than thirteen years since our high school days.

Our friendship was kindled in an unconventional yet memorable setting – the guitar storage room of our high school's music department. It was there, among the silent witnesses of countless musical journeys, that we discovered our shared passion for music. This passion laid the foundation for a friendship that has since been characterized by mutual respect, learning, and unwavering support. Jacob, a prodigious musician and guitarist, took on the role of not just a friend but also a mentor, guiding me through both musical explorations and life's intricate challenges.

Jacob's loyalty, empathy, and unparalleled ability to provide perspective have been constant sources of strength and inspiration. His reputation among our peers and within the broader community is exemplary, marked by his generosity, kindness, and an unfailing commitment to uphold moral values. Jacob's dedication to his family and friends stands as a testament to his character and the depth of his relationships.

In conclusion, I respectfully request that you consider the full measure of Jacob's character, his positive influence on those around him, and the genuine commitment he has shown to living a life of integrity and kindness. His actions and the role he has played in the lives of his friends and family speak volumes of his character and the positive impact he continues to make.

Thank you for your consideration of my letter. I am grateful for the opportunity.

Sincerely,  
Alex Sherbin

[contact.alexsherbin@gmail.com](mailto:contact.alexsherbin@gmail.com)  
(917) 680-9944

Honorable Kiyo A. Matsumoto  
U.S. District Court Judge  
Eastern District of New York  
225 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Judge Matsumoto

My name is Evelyn Liebowitz, and I am 48 years old living in Long Island, NY with my husband and our three teenage children. I am writing on behalf of my nephew Jacob Yusuf. Jacob was born when I was 18 years old, I was a big part in help raising him and taking care of him on daily basis. Jacob grew up with a huge family support and since he was an only grandchild for many years he received personal attention from every member of the family. Jacob grew up in loving, caring, disciplined home. I had the pleasure of watching Jacob grow up to be an ambitious, smart, creative, respectful, intelligent young man. Jacob has always strived to be the best at everything he tried. Jacob had a passion for music at a very early age, he discovered his creative side, he wrote poems, lyrics to songs.

At a young age he was ambitious enough to teach himself how to play the guitar and he achieved that. His passion for music never went unnoticed. He then became determined to attend a college in New York city where his talent would grow and flourish. Jacob then went on to join the US Army and he completed a tough training program and continued to stay dedicated, motivated, and disciplined through the process.

Jacob is a son, a sibling, a grandson, and an uncle, he is a huge part of our lives. He has especially been a tremendous help to my mother who has health issues, and he resides with her for many years now to watch over her and help her.

Jacob is an uncle to my children who he has helped with schoolwork, college advice and admission and most importantly friendships. I ask you to please take in to consideration that Jacob has never been in any kind of trouble, he is a good young man with family values and a bright future ahead of him.

I thank you for taking the time to read my letter and my plea to allow Jacob a chance to enter society with a clean slate.

Thank you!

Evelyn Liebowitz